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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE NEW SIDE OF WAR

SIR,—In the June number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW there appeared an interesting article on "The Bright Side of War." The writer presents her original claim in the opening lines, saying:

In these days of widespread anxiety concerning moral issues, we are not likely to undervalue the crimes and horrors of the present war; but we seem to have fallen into the mistake of underestimating the pleasant side of it.

The argument which follows contains many truths, which all fair readers may easily admit, but the conclusions are invariably based upon an hypothesis which is stated in the words of Nelson at Copenhagen: "But mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands."

If this state of exultation filled the breasts of all soldiers in our modern wars, there would be no answer to Mrs. Portor's claim; indeed, unanimous agreement would be only just when she asserts:

By this (the bright side of war) I mean frankly the actual happiness that comes with war to the legions of soldiers themselves, in such measure as I believe is but rarely or never meted out to men in times of peace.

Is it possible today for careful, thinking, knowing folk to consent to this certainly startling plea? If this much is admitted, civilization, as it has developed for many significant centuries, must be written down as based upon a mistaken foundation. But is it true, *today*, that war offers to men the sort of "happiness" that cannot be found through peace? An examination of the historic records does not seem to sanction the claim. In ancient Greece it was quite possible for heroic souls to see their equally heroic gods and goddesses hovering in mid-air and aiding, with their supermundane powers, their favorites on either side. All of us can still feel the martial glow of fervor and fire as Hector and Achilles stride splendidly to mortal combat and personally exult and destroy; but much water has run under the bridges of time since Greece had her golden day and Rome ruled the world. The slow, steadfast work of the patient, purposeful centuries has built up new conceptions of war—and new conceptions of peace.

Mrs. Portor writes:

We have not yet in this present conflict been touched upon the lips; but we are sentimentalists, taking in the conflict through the eye and ear, like those who, whether by circumstances or temperament or both, have rather looked on at life than been of it; or those who, never having willingly risked their lives, cannot endure the sight of others doing so; who would stop all happiness of heroism because they cannot bear to see blood. It is the sentimentality of the emotional play-goer and novel-reader; and few of us are free from the taint of it.

Now in summing up the final values of war, as it unfolds before our eyes in these latter days, are we not compelled to think in terms of 1916 and not after the fashion of less complex times than ours? Must we not take into full account first the *new* side of war and then the *new* side of peace before we can justly decide that to oppose war, or to accentuate its terrors, is in any sense a proof of unworthy sentimentalism?

Let us look at the new side of war. What is it? Where, in the conflicts of the past few years, can we discover even a faint trace of the possibilities for personal exaltation which were easily attained in the oldtime battles, when men met men and "fought it out" in good, lusty, human fashion until the weaker was vanquished and the hero was crowned?

Modern warfare spells—munitions, first, last and always, munitions. On land the personal attacks are preceded by violent bombardments from the enemy—the enemy who is yards, or it may be, miles away! At sea, the dreadnoughts throw their tons of metal from the far-distant offing, and the greatest menace to the foe lurks with the torpedoes from the dark, the mines in hidden waves, or the bombs dropped from the open skies. There is not even a sign of the man-to-man struggle of the old heroic hours. Then again:

Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Honor, asking to be allowed to give their lives nobly, it is not unlikely that Life will grant their request.

None will deny this vital truth, but when two or three thousands are gathered together in the name of Destruction, and very few, if any, have a chance to die nobly, it is most likely that Death in its most horrid guise will take its grim toll. This is the thing which made as brave a man as General Sherman define war as he did over half a century ago; and this is the grave problem which today is facing the modern mind.

The old idea of war as wholesome combat has disappeared completely. We of the present hour are confronted with the dark visage of a new and grewsome monster whose jaws are big and strong enough to crunch out all semblance of our hard-won civilization.

It is Joy, after all, that is the greatest of all true teachers; for it is through human joys that humankind has worked its toilsome way out from the depths of savagery and sorrow into the light of civilization and comfort. War is the last link with savagery, and until war has gone out into the darkness with want and hunger and sickness unwatched and untended, we cannot fully claim that civilization is achieved.

This, then, is The New Idea of War. Life is more precious in 1916 than it has ever been before; Joy is more easily accessible; comfort is more speedily assured, and with living a daily opportunity for mental and spiritual expressions—when there is peace—it is an excusable thing to arraign the horrors of strife, since all strife is the kill-joy of progress.

But, even in the face of these conclusions, it may be frankly admitted that:

To the fit and the strong of spirit, there is a personal happiness to be found in worthy conflict as nowhere else. In biography, in history, this "happiness" stands out indisputable.

But it still remains to ask, "Is the present conflict worthy?" This is the crucial test. As careful an authority as Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson tells us gravely today these thought-compelling things:

But, while power may be sought for its own sake, it is commonly sought by modern States as a means to wealth. It is the pursuit of markets and concessions and outlets for capital that lies behind the colonial policy that leads to wars.

States compete for the right to exploit the weak, and in this competition, Governments are prompted or controlled by financial interests. . . . The Powers combine for a moment to suppress the common victim, the next thing they are at one another's throat *over the spoil.*" (The italics are mine.)

Where is "the bright side" to this kind of war—in the twentieth century?

To claim then that there is still a bright side to war is just, perhaps; it is also perhaps true—but only as it is true that Mrs. Browning and Robert Louis Stevenson were brave and virile spirits in spite of their ailing flesh. When Columbus came to America he found here the Indian "braves" whose boast was proudly kept, that none could see them flinch even when horrid torture did its worst upon their quivering flesh. Of such high elements is our human stuff composed—and there are none to deny its heroism—but "prevention" is the last word in all modern methods; cure is now only the secondary expedient in disease. Thus war, with all its long list of "glories," with all its brilliant pageantries, and all its brave heroics, is the potential mother of misery, and, if indeed it still must live, let us solemnly face its terrors, but let us admit their truth. Let us soberly take up arms and suffer and bleed and die, if needs must be, but let us not—in the name of humankind—minimize for one moment the thing that all modern warfare must of necessity mean.

ELIZABETH CARPENTER.

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.

THE CONSTITUTION VERSUS TARIFF COMMISSIONS

SIR,—There are three real obstacles intervening between the present status and the establishment of an effective tariff commission in the United States. They may be indicated as follows:

1. Article 1, Section VII, of the Constitution of the United States, first paragraph, says: "All bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives, but the Senate may propose or concur with the amendments as on other bills."

2. Article 1, Section V, of the Constitution of the United States, second paragraph, says: "Each house may determine the rule of its proceedings," etc.

3. The fact that under the power granted by the people in the last quoted portion of the Constitution, the Senate and the House have appointed committees which, under their rules, have exclusive jurisdiction of the tariff and all collateral matters.

No two points are better settled than that the House of Representatives has jurisdiction, in the first instance, of all revenue bills, and that both Houses have full power, direct from the people, to settle the rules of their proceedings.

It would be useless to go into the long history of the struggle between the committees in the House of Representatives and the various attempts made by strong men in the membership of the two houses to enlarge or narrow the jurisdiction of committees. The Committee on Ways and Means